

planning for post-liberation Iraq under section 7 of the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 (Public Law 105–338).

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate.

Remarks Following Discussions With Business Leaders

April 15, 2003

Christine, thanks for the kind words. Thank you for being a entrepreneur who was encouraging to your fellow workers to serve their country. You represent a lot of bosses across this country who encouraged the reservist or the guard, who made sure there was a job available when they came home and, at the same time, supported their family. And I want to thank you very much for that.

I want to welcome you all to the Rose Garden. It is a beautiful day. It's a beautiful day for our country too. We've got troops still fighting in Iraq, and our Nation takes great pride in the men and women who wear our country's uniform and who sacrifice for security and peace. The world has seen their skill and their courage and their humanity. They bring security to our country and, at the same time, bring freedom to the Iraqi people.

I appreciate the chance to meet with small-business leaders from around our country to discuss the challenges facing our economy. The small-business folks in America, the entrepreneurs, represent one of the great strengths of this country, the spirit of free enterprise, the willingness to take risk, the hard work required to move this economy forward.

Small-business owners and employees understand that this economy has a great deal of unmet potential. The American people have all the talent to meet that potential, and that's why I'm so optimistic about the future for our economy.

The Nation needs quick action by our Congress on a progrowth economic package. We need tax relief totaling at least \$550 billion to make sure our economy grows. And

American workers and American businesses need every bit of that relief now so that people who want to find a job can find one, so that people looking for work are able to put food on the table for their families.

I want to thank Christine for coming. I appreciate the fact that she is the CEO of her own business. We just had a roundtable discussion in the Roosevelt Room, and one of the things I love—told the folks there I loved about America was the fact that somebody can own their own business, that ours is an ownership society. I think that's one of the things that makes America so unique, is the entrepreneurial spirit and the drive by people from all walks of life to start their own business, succeed with their own business. And at the same time, it's that drive that makes it likely somebody is going to find work.

I appreciate Karla Aaron, who's with us as well, Hialeah Metal Spinning from South Florida. And I want to thank Tim Barrett, who is the owner of Wood World. Tim said he's got—he's about as small a business unit as you can get. He's got four employees. I said, "Well, it's four times bigger than the smallest." [Laughter] And I appreciate Frank Fillmore as the president of The Fillmore Group. Thank you all for standing up here as well.

Steve Anderson was with us today, who is the head of the National Restaurant Association. His association represents all kinds of entrepreneurs. The restaurant industry is a great place for people to get their start in achieving the American Dream.

Sal Gomez was here representing the Denver Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. The most interesting statistics about the entrepreneurial spirit is the number of Hispanic small businesses that are flourishing in our country. It's one of the great tributes to America and our open society.

I appreciate so very much Tom Donohue, who is the head of the U.S. Chamber, for joining us today. Jerry Jasinowski is the head of the National Association of Manufacturers, is with us. Karen Kerrigan is the Small Business Survival Committee—that's a pretty good name. [Laughter] Tom Musser is the National Federation of Independent Businesses, NFIB. And Terry Neese is Women

Impacting Public Policy, joined us at our discussion in the Roosevelt Room; Bill Parsley of Carswell Distributing Company; Dirk Van Dongen, who is my good buddy, who represents the National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors; and Melanie Sabelhaus, who represents the Small Business Administration. We had a great discussion. I want to thank you all for joining us there, and I appreciate everybody else coming today as well.

On the first day of the new Congress more than 3 months ago, I spoke to the business leaders in Chicago, Illinois. I described two great and immediate tasks facing our country: first, to meet the dangers to America wherever they gather; and secondly, to achieve a vigorous and growing economy. Those remain the highest priorities of my administration. And there's no doubt we're going to meet those priorities.

This Government is acting to protect the American people from the threats of a new era. In Iraq, the regime of Saddam Hussein is no more. A month ago—one month ago—that country was a prison to its people, a haven for terrorists, an arsenal of weapons that endangered the world. Today, the world is safer. The terrorists have lost an ally. The Iraqi people are regaining control of their own destiny. These are good days in the history of freedom.

Our victory in Iraq is certain, but it is not complete. Centralized power of the dictator has ended. Yet, in parts of Iraq, desperate and dangerous elements remain. Forces of our coalition will engage these enemies until they surrender or until they're destroyed. We have waged this war with determination and with clarity of purpose, and we will see it through until the job is done.

As we press on to liberate every corner of Iraq, we are beginning the difficult work of helping Iraqis to build a free and stable country. The immediate tasks involve establishing order as well as delivering food and water and medicines. We'll help Iraqis to restore electrical power and other basic services. We'll help destroy the former regime's weapons of mass destruction. We'll help the Iraqi people to establish a just and representative government which respects human rights and adheres to the rule of law. These

tasks will take effort, and these tasks will take time. But I have faith in the Iraqi people, and I believe that a free Iraq can be an example of reform and progress to all the Middle East.

Our victory in Iraq will be a crucial advance in the war against terror. Yet, the war on terror continues. Our Nation is still threatened by determined and resourceful enemies. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction remains a danger to the civilized world. Yet from the very day our country was attacked, we have sent a clear message to all who would threaten us and our friends and our allies: The United States of America and our coalition will defend ourselves. When we make a pledge, we mean it. We keep our word, and what we begin, we will finish.

Another great priority of the Government is to encourage prosperity and the creation of jobs for all who seek them. Here in Washington, we're now determining the size and the shape of a package to promote growth in jobs. It's not "if" we have a package; it's how big will the package be? The "if" is over with. In this debate, the goal is not to set arbitrary numbers for that package. The goal is to determine what our economy needs, what small businesses need, what workers need, and then to take actions necessary to meet those needs. The proposals I announced 3 months ago were designed to address specific weaknesses slowing down our economy and keeping companies from hiring new workers. Those weaknesses remain today.

All of you know that economic and job growth will come when consumers buy more goods and services from businesses such as your own. And the best and fairest way to make sure Americans can do that is to grant them immediate tax relief so they have more of their own money to spend or save.

In 2001, the Congress passed broad tax reductions in income taxes and promised much of this tax relief for future years. With the economy as it is, the American people need that relief right away. The tax cuts are good enough for the American taxpayers 3 or 5 or 7 years from now; they are even better today.

Instead of lowering taxes little by little, the Congress should do it all at once and give our economy the boost it needs. Instead of gradually reducing the marriage penalty, we should do it now. Instead of slowly raising the child credit from \$600 to \$1,000, we should do it now. And we should send the extra \$400 per child to American families this year, 2003.

All together, these tax reductions will help 92 million Americans. And a significant part of the benefit to our economy will come within the first 2 years of the plan. A family of four with an income of \$40,000 would receive a 96-percent reduction in Federal income taxes. Instead of paying \$1,178 per year, the family would pay \$45 a year. That means extra money in the family budget, year after year. That money can cover a lot of bills. That money can help families with purchases they have been delaying. That money will be in circulation, which will be good for our economy.

And this plan will help our small-business sector. The benefits of the growth plan will come from increased consumer spending and, as importantly, from lower income-tax rates on the small businesses themselves. It is important for our fellow citizens to understand that most small businesses pay their business taxes at the individual rates. Most small businesses are sole proprietorships or limited partnerships or Subchapter S's.

And therefore, when you reduce individual tax rates, you benefit small-business formation. As a matter of fact, under this plan, some 23 million small-business owners will see their taxes cut, which leaves more money for investment, more money for growth, more money for job creation. A growing economy also needs small-business investment, and our Tax Code should encourage investment. Today, a small business can deduct a maximum of \$25,000 in the year in which they buy equipment. We need to triple the amount that can be deducted in the year in which they buy equipment.

So I proposed to Congress that they ought to limit—the limit ought to be increased to \$75,000, and that limit ought to be indexed to inflation. By doing so, we promote greater investment in machinery, and when a small business buys a machine, it enhances their

company's productivity. As well, it means the machinery manufacturer is likely to have more work available. More investment equals jobs, and what we're interested in in this administration is helping people who look for work find a job.

We can also promote economic growth and job creation by removing the double tax on dividends. Taxing corporate income once is fair. It is not fair for the Federal Government to tax the same money twice. The burden of double taxation falls on the millions of individuals who receive dividends. It falls especially hard on seniors, who receive half of all dividend income.

The removal of double taxation would put more money into the hands of investors; it would encourage more investment in American businesses. Economists say that this plan will help our stock markets. And since half of American families own stock, the reform will help them save and help our economy grow.

Now, these measures were presented to the Congress in the first week of this year. The progrowth package was urgent in January. It's even more urgent today. It is important for you all to understand and for our fellow Americans to understand, the tax relief I have proposed and will push for until enacted will create 1.4 million new jobs by the end of 2004.

In 2 years' time, this Nation has experienced war, a recession, and a national emergency, which has caused our Government to run a deficit. The best way to reduce the deficit is with more growth in our economy, which means more revenues to our Treasury and less spending in Washington, DC.

I am pleased that both the House and the Senate have passed budget resolutions that show real spending restraint. And now the Congress must focus on a robust and effective growth package. We need at least \$550 billion in that package because the more tax relief that goes to the American people, the more jobs we will create in this economy.

The last few months have been a time of challenge for America. Our resolve has been tested. Yet, we have the great resources of national strength and national character to overcome every challenge we face. Our confidence and our optimism have never

wavered. We are defending the peace of the world. We're bringing freedom to corners of the world that haven't seen freedom in years. We're also building the prosperity of our country.

This is a unique moment in our history, and the American people are rising to meet it.

I want to thank each of you for your hard work. I want to thank each of you for the faith you have shown in this country's future. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless America. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:16 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Christine J. Bierman, founder and chief executive officer, Colt Safety, Fire & Rescue; Karla Aaron, owner, Hialeah Metal Spinning, Inc.; Tim Barrett, owner, Wood World; Frank C. Fillmore, Jr., founder and president, The Fillmore Group; Steven C. Anderson, president and chief executive officer, National Restaurant Association; Salvador Gomez, chairman of the board and chief executive officer, Denver Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; Thomas J. Donohue, president and chief executive officer, U.S. Chamber of Commerce; Jerry Jasinowski, president, National Association of Manufacturers; Karen Kerrigan, chairman, Small Business Survival Committee; Tom Musser, chairman of the board, National Federation of Independent Business; Terry Neese, president and co-founder, Women Impacting Public Policy; William Parsley, president, Carswell Distributing Co.; Dirk Van Dongen, president, National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Proclamation 7664—National Fair Housing Month, 2003

April 15, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The Fair Housing Act was signed on April 11, 1968, just one week after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This landmark bill, Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, resulted from the hard work and leadership of Dr. King and others in the civil rights movement and was an important step

toward confronting discrimination against minorities in housing. As we celebrate the 35th anniversary of this historic legislation, we reaffirm our commitment to ensuring that all Americans have equal access to housing.

The Fair Housing Act of 1968 has helped open doors of opportunity for countless families. Since its passage, America has made significant progress in achieving equal housing access for all individuals.

Despite this progress, more work remains in our struggle to achieve equality and racial justice. Prejudice and discriminatory practices in housing still exist in America. A recent lending study showed that minorities continue to receive less information, less assistance, and less favorable terms and conditions than non-minorities while applying for home loans. These practices are wrong. As a Nation, and as individuals, we must be vigilant in responding to discrimination wherever we find it and ensuring that minority families have access to housing. With my minority homeownership initiative and its partnership with the private sector, I have set a goal to increase the number of minority homeowners by 5.5 million by 2010.

All Americans should know their housing rights, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is working to increase public awareness of fair housing laws, including those combating discrimination in mortgage lending. The 2004 budget request for HUD includes \$50 million for fair housing—a 9 percent increase over 2003 funding—with a substantial portion specifically allocated for increased education and outreach efforts. The Department is also collaborating with the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation on a financial education program in minority neighborhoods. In addition, the HUD, Education, and the Treasury Departments are advancing initiatives to educate families about homeownership through counseling programs and financial literacy efforts.

We are also vigilantly enforcing fair housing laws, showing no tolerance for those who discriminate. The Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity at HUD is working with private industry and fair housing and community advocates to promote voluntary compliance and to ensure that consumers are treated in a lawful, respectful manner. When